

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 11-16, 18, 19, 21-24 and 28-34 are pending in the present application. Claims 21-24 and 29-34 are withdrawn from consideration. Claims 11-16, 18-19 and 28 are rejected. In response, claims 11 and 18 have been amended to replace the word “material” with the word “matrix,” and previously cancelled claims 20 and 25-27 have been rewritten as new claims 35-38. No new matter is added by these amendments. Entry of these amendments is requested.

With Respect to the Withdrawal of Claims 21-24 and 29-34, Paragraphs 3-5 of the Office Action:

Claims 21-24 stand withdrawn as being drawn to a nonelected species and claims 29-34 stand withdrawn as being drawn to a nonelected invention.

With respect to claims 21-24, as indicated below, claims 11-16, 18-29 and 28 are now believed to be in condition for allowance. As stated in the Office Action dated March 7, 2003, Paper No. 6, paragraph 9, claims 21-24 were withdrawn from further consideration as being drawn to a nonelected species as there was no allowable generic or linking claim. As claims 21-24 depend upon claim 11, which is now believed to be in condition for allowance for the reasons indicated below, rejoinder of claims 21-24 is hereby requested.

With respect to claims 29-34, currently withdrawn, the Applicant acknowledges the United States Patent Trademark Office’s legal reasoning in the Office Action dated August 25, 2003, paragraph 6. Even though rejoinder is not legally required for claims 29-34, the Applicant believes that claims 29-34 should now be considered allowable because they are dependent upon claim 11, which is now believed to be allowable for the reasons indicated below, and that no additional search or examination would appear to be necessary to determine the allowability of these claims. If, however, the United States Patent and Trademark Office still considers claims 29-34 not to be allowable even in view of their dependency upon claim 11, the Applicant authorizes the United States Patent and Trademark Office to cancel claims

29-34 by Examiner's Amendment without further argument. However, rejoinder and an indication of allowance is requested for claims 29-34 if possible.

With Respect to the Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and 103, Paragraphs 8-11 of the Office Action:

Claims 11-16, 18, 19, and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) and under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for the reasons indicated in paragraphs 8-10 of the Office Action. In accordance with instructions from the Examiner by telephone on November 20, 2003, claims 11 and 18 have been amended to replace the word "material" with the word "matrix." The Examiner indicated that this amendment would distinguish claims 11-16, 18, 19 and 28 over the cited prior art and would make these claims allowable. Accordingly, claims 11-16, 18, 19 and 28 are now believed to be in condition for allowance. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) and 103(a) and allowance of claims 11-16, 18, 19 and 28 is hereby requested.

With Respect to Previously Canceled Claims 20 and 25-27:

Claims 35-38 are added by this amendment and are identical to previously canceled claims 20 and 25-27 which were canceled on December 10, 2002 in response to a restriction requirement. These claims have been placed back into the application and a request for reconsideration of these claims is hereby requested as generic claim 11, on which claims 35-38 depend, is now believed to be in condition for allowance. If, however, the United States Patent and Trademark Office still considers claims 35-38 not to be allowable even in view of their dependency upon claim 11, the Applicant authorizes the United States Patent and Trademark Office to cancel new claims 35-38 by Examiner's Amendment without further argument.

CONCLUSION

Claims 11-16 and 18-38 are now believed to be in condition for allowance for the reasons stated above and a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited. Additionally, the Applicant requests reconsideration of the withdrawal of claims 21-24 and 29-34 and

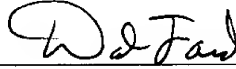
reconsideration of claims 35-38. If, however, there remain any issues that can be resolved by telephone with the Applicants representative, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned directly.

If any extension of time is required, such extension is hereby requested. No fee is believed due in connection with this communication. However, if any fee is due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of the fee associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 19-2090.

Respectfully submitted,

SHELDON & MAK PC

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